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FM AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8694
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JCS WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SARAJEVO 001202

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SCE(HOH/FOOKS/STINCHCOMB) AND
S/WCI(WILLIAMSON/VIBUL)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/01/2015

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SUBJECT: BOSNIA - OHR/EU POISED TO LIFT TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS
AND VISA BANS ON KARADZIC FAMILY

REF: SARAJEVO 1180

Classified By: Ambassador Charles English. Reason 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (U) This is an action request. See paragraph seven below.

12. (C) SUMMARY: Republika Srpska Prime Minister Milorad Dodik continued to make public statements about the July 21 arrest of Radovan Karadzic. Among other things, Dodik criticized attacks on the RS by leading Bosniak politicians in the wake of the arrest and called upon them and others to apologize to Serbs for crimes committed against them in the 1992-1995 war.

At the same time, Dodik argued Karadzic's arrest in Serbia had "proven" that the RS, its institutions, and individuals residing in the RS had not been responsible for harboring him. With this in mind, Dodik labeled as "illegal" previous actions by OHR to "punish" Bosnian Serbs for supporting PIFWCs (e.g., removals, travel bans). Dodik called on the HighRep to return to the Karadzic family their travel documents and for the EU to respect "their right" to travel and see their father. Though Lajcak had promised to consult with international partners before making a decision to return the Karadzic family documents, he announced at the July 24 Steering Board Ambassadors (SBA) meeting that he would do so as soon as Karadzic was in The Hague. We also learned that the EU plans to remove the Karadzic family from its visa ban list. We are concerned about both decisions, particularly EU plans to lift the visa ban. It is not clear to us that the potential implications of these decisions have been considered. Specifically their potential impact on the broader edifice constructed by OHR, the EU, and the U.S. to put pressure on the PIFWCs. We recommend Washington weight in with Brussels and EU Member States and urge that they slow down and consult before taking a decision. END SUMMARY

Dodik Calls for "Apology" to Serbs and Republika Srpska

13. (SBU) Dodik and other senior RS officials and political leaders continued to react to the July 21 arrest of ICTY indictee Radovan Karadzic. Dodik criticized statements by the leaders of Bosnia's two largest Bosniak political parties, Haris Silajdzic and Sulejman Tihic, for using Karadzic's arrest to "call into question" the existence of the RS, adding, "this is the moment when others should apologize to (Serbian President) Tadic, me, and many important institutions in the RS and in Serbia for killing Serbs." During a July 23 television interview Dodik was asked whether Karadzic's arrest might contribute to reconciliation in Bosnia, and responded that "BiH looks more like a state falling apart than like a functioning state, unfortunately." Dodik acknowledged comments made earlier (on

the same program) by SDA Vice President Bakir Izetbegovic noting that Bosniaks "were ready to accept the existence of the RS," but Dodik dismissed them as "too late" since emotions in the RS were "running high due to frequent calls to abolish the RS."

Dodik Demands Return of Karadzic Travel Documents

¶4. (SBU) In addition to commenting critically to statements by Bosniak political leaders, Dodik expanded on his initial observations that the RS had been unjustly accused of harboring Karadzic (Reftel). In a July 23 television interview, Dodik again stressed that it was now clear Karadzic had not been hiding in the RS despite frequent assertions. He criticized decisions taken by then-HighRep Paddy Ashdown to remove RS officials suspected of providing support to ICTY fugitives, labeling these decisions "illegal." Dodik claimed that the RS government will have to pay "thousands of marks" compensation to these individuals (as a result, he claimed of "court verdicts"), and implied that he would now seek compensation in turn from OHR and/or the international community. Dodik also called for OHR to return the Karadzic family's travel documents and for the EU to allow the family to exercise "their right to visit their father" in The Hague. This position was echoed by other political leaders from the RS and several RS NGOs, most notably SPONA, an association of RS war veterans groups.

Lajcak Takes Tough Public Line; EU Pressure to Act

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¶5. (C) During a July 23 interview, HighRep Lajcak took a tough public line on Dodik's call for the return of the Karadzic family travel documents and the family's so-called right to travel to The Hague, arguing that this issue should not be a "top humanitarian priority." He added that the Karadzic family "is going to have many opportunities to see their father in years to come. This is not something we can say about victims from Srebrenica and other places." Lajcak also stressed that he planned to consult with key international partners before making any decisions. However, at the July 25 SBA Lajcak said that he planned to return the Karadzic family travel documents once Radovan Karadzic is in The Hague. Lajcak also reported that the EU planned to lift its visa ban on the Karadzic family. (Note: We understand that COWEB took a preliminary decision to recommend the lifting of the ban earlier this week, but that it must still be confirmed at higher organization level within the EU. End Note) The French Ambassador, speaking in her capacity as representative of the EU Presidency, noted that the EU "had been under pressure" to lift the travel ban.

Concern About Hasty OHR/EU Action on Karadzic Family

¶6. (C) The Ambassador expressed concern about Lajcak's decision to return the Karadzic family travel documents and EU plans to remove them from their visa ban list. He underscored that the decisions to seize the documents and to place the Karadzic family on the visa ban list had been taken in close coordination with the U.S. and that we had hoped there would be similar consultation before the decisions were reversed. The Ambassador stressed that he was concerned about moving so quickly on the Karadzic family without having first considered the potential implications of these decisions. He noted that other PIFWC supporters might now demand the same treatment, particularly given the loud claims by Dodik and others in the RS that Karadzic's arrest in Serbia had proven that individuals in the RS were not responsible for protecting him. We did not want to inadvertently collapse or otherwise undermine the work done by OHR and by SBA members bilaterally to put pressure on by PIFWCs by cutting off their supporters, particularly with

Mladic still at large.

Comment and Action Request

17. (C) Though not usually known for the speed of its decision making, the EU appears to be moving quickly to lift its visa ban on the Karadzic family while at the same time the HighRep prepares to return the family's travel documents (despite his promise to consult with international partners first). During the SBA the French Ambassador implied that the intention was to allow a one-off humanitarian visit by the Karadzic family to The Hague, but others, including Lajcak, implied it was a blanket lifting of the visa ban. While it might make sense to allow a "humanitarian visit" we are concerned that the EU and the HighRep are moving much too quickly and have failed to consider the downstream implications of these decisions. The comments by Dodik and others in the RS clearly suggested that they would like to use Karadzic's arrest to undermine the entire edifice of OHR actions against PIFWC supporters. We recommend that Washington weigh in with Brussels and EU Member State capitals and ask them to slow down and consult more closely with the U.S. before acting. There is no need for the EU to rush.

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